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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 000885

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SUBJECT: MFA TELLS DAS DIBBLE THAT GOI GRAPPLING WITH
DEFINITION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Classified By: Classified by: DCM Gene A. Cretz, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: MFA officials told NEA DAS Liz Dibble that the GOI is going through a comprehensive inter-agency process to define humanitarian assistance and formulate how best to continue it to the Palestinians without benefiting Hamas. They also want a mechanism that would permit the GOI to track assistance and determine the final destination. According to one MFA official, most UN agencies should be able to continue their work, but UNRWA and UNDP are more problematic. The GOI does not want to see an expansion of UNRWA's mandate to non-refugee populations and UNDP works directly with the PA government. MFA officials said that the GOI is grappling with where to draw the line on aid to education for the Palestinians as well as how to continue healthcare cooperation without working with the Hamas government. End summary.

2. (C) NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Dibble met on February 23 with MFA Director General Ron Prossor, North America Deputy Director General Yoram Ben-Zeev, Deputy Director General for International Organizations and UN Ronny Leshno-Yaar, Director of the Multilateral Track and Water Issues Yaacov Keidar, and Deputy Director General for Economic Affairs Yossi Gal to discuss the GOI's approach to future assistance to the Palestinians. DAS Dibble detailed the U.S. worldwide demarche asking countries not to meet with Hamas, and if they do so, to do it below the political level and push Hamas to abide by the Quartet principles. She also explained that the U.S. wants to ensure that Humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people continues, while not benefiting the Hamas government.

GOI Inter-Agency Consultations

3. (C) Director General Ron Prossor said that the GOI is conducting comprehensive inter-agency consultations to help formulate how to continue assistance to the Palestinians while still applying pressure on the Hamas government. Ronny Leshno-Yaar said that FM Tzipi Livni chaired a February 22 inter-agency meeting covering how to define exactly what constitutes humanitarian assistance. Yoram Ben-Zeev said that Livni met February 21 with deputy ministers and asked for creative ideas to resolve this issue. He said Livni is not dismissing any suggestion, including possible international oversight of projects. He said there is no GOI blueprint yet on how to proceed.

Trying to Define Humanitarian Assistance

4. (C) Yossi Gal said that the GOI is looking at the whole spectrum of assistance activities, from those obviously meeting humanitarian needs (provision of basic foodstuffs) to those likely to aid terror, and is judging each assistance project by where it fits on that axis. In addition, Gal said, Israeli officials are talking to colleagues in the international community, including the Norwegians, Japanese, and EU, and screening each project with them. He said sewage and water projects should continue, adding it is also important to create a mechanism that would permit the GOI to track assistance and determine the final destination.

5. (C) Leshno-Yaar said the GOI wants to see a continuation of humanitarian assistance through existing mechanisms such as NGOs and UN agencies. He said almost all the UN agencies, such as UNESCO, and their projects are "kosher" for the GOI. Leshno-Yaar said UNRWA, which deals with refugees, is a separate case and is in a different category. The GOI does not want to see an expansion of UNRWA's mandate to non-refugee populations, he said. He said the GOI would like more control over education provided by UNRWA and over how it vets employees. The UNDP, Leshno-Yaar said, is also a problem, because it is infrastructure project-oriented and works directly with the PA. He said that because the ICRC already works with Hamas, its participation is a matter of concern. Although the GOI might like to expand cooperation with the ICRC, that might not be possible, he said.

Education and Health

16. (C) Prossor said that the issue of assistance to education is not simple, because the PA government is changing hands from a secular nationalist movement to a radical Islamist one, and that could influence what is taught in schools. Yossi Gal said that the GOI does not want a generation of Palestinian children who do not attend school, but, at the same time, it is not clear where the GOI will draw the line on aid to education. The GOI does not want to pick up the tab for salaries. Prossor expressed doubt that Iran could make up the shortfall if western nations cut assistance to the PA.

17. (C) Gal said that health care assistance is another complicated issue. For example, he said, Palestinians who are ill, such as cancer patients, receive treatment in Israeli hospitals. He explained that the current procedure is that they receive documentation detailing their need for treatment from the PA and give that document to an Israeli hospital, which is then reimbursed by the GOI Ministry of Health. Gal said one idea under consideration for handling Palestinian patients after the inauguration of the Hamas government is for them to receive documentation from ICRC. Another issue being looked at, Leshno-Yaar said, is how the Magen David Adom will work with the Palestinian Red Crescent when the Hamas government is in place.

18. (U) DAS Dibble has cleared this cable.

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JONES